

PROPOSALS

OPENING BY SUBSCRIPTION,
A
BOTANIC GARDEN,
TO BE CALLED THE

London Botanic Garden:

DESIGNED FOR THE

Use of the Physician, the Apothecary,
the student in Physic, the scientific
Farmer, the Botanist, (particularly
the English Botanist,) the lover of
Flowers, and the Public in general

BY

WILLIAM CURTIS, APOTHECARY

AUTHOR of the FLORA LONDINENSIS.

L O N D O N:

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PROPOSALS, &c.

IT must be allowed, that all human knowledge ought to be subservient to the good of society, and in proportion as this is advanced by any science, so ought that science to be held in esteem.

Providence in his unerring wisdom, having allotted to mankind different capacities, and implanted in them propensities to particular pursuits, that what is matter of the greatest satisfaction to one shall be perfectly insipid to another, it is no wonder that they should differ so widely in the apprehending utility of their respective employments; each, from a principle of self love, being willing to think his own of the greatest importance: and so strongly this idea impressed on the minds of some, as to betray them into a narrowness of thinking, inconsistent with that liberality of sentiment, which would excite a wish for the universal increase of science when connected, even in the remotest degree, with the interests of mankind.

Without derogating then in the least from the utility of other sciences, but leaving every one to pursue his own favourite study and employment, I shall, in a few words, endeavour to point out the utility of Botany, a science which this design is particularly intended to promote.

Various are the advantages which prompt us to the pursuit of this species of knowledge. Among all the studies which engage mankind, there are none more pleasing, more extensive, or in which the *utile* *dulci* is so intimately blended.

It is a science which has been cultivated by the wisest of mankind, and particularly by the most distinguished professors of the medical art. Here, as philosophers, we may admire and contemplate the beautiful works of an almighty being. What an infinite display of wisdom, is observable in the different modes of the growth and propagation of plants ! What care is taken in perpetuating the succession of each species ! How admirably are they adapted to grow in every different soil and situation, so as to leave no part of the globe, not even rocks
and

and stones, uncovered ! With what regular order and in what constant succession, do they flower and produce their seeds ! In short, a mind that is of an inquisitive or contemplative turn, will find in plants an endless source of innocent amusement. Another world, as it were, opens to his view. He beholds the face of nature through a new medium of vision and has the superior pleasure of being able to read that book, which to the generality of mankind is mere blank.

The importance of this science, as a branch of medical knowledge, is happily expressed by the late ingenious Dr. GREGORY, the ornament of his profession, and I may add of human nature ; in his advice to the young Physician, he thus delivers his sentiments on this head : “ *The science of botany subservient to the practice of physic, as far as it facilitates the knowledge of plants, by reducing them into the most commodious and perfect system ; and although it is not necessary to be particularly acquainted with the name and history of every plant, yet every one ought to be so well founded in the principles of botany, as to be able to find its place in the system, and to describe*

Scientifically : AND WE OUGHT TO BE PARTICULARLY ACQUAINTED WITH EVERY MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCE RELATIVE TO THOSE PLANTS WHICH ARE USED IN DIET OR MEDICINE.

It is however much to be regretted, that this science is held in so little esteem by gentlemen of the faculty in this country. On the skill of ignorant and illiterate persons, are they often obliged to depend for many of their efficacious officinal plants, and should a spurious sort be offered them either through ignorance or design, from a want of application to this science, they are incapable of judging right, and consequently expose both themselves and their patients to suffer by the negligence and imposition of others.

Although new discovered chemical remedies, and foreign drugs, may have justly superseded many of our English plants, yet a great number are still retained in our Pharmacopœa, and many possess very valuable qualities : to be acquainted with these at present, is the duty of every one, that takes on himself the important character of guardian of the healths.

But it is not to physic alone that botany is subservient ; perhaps it may be applied with as much advantage to agriculture as to any other science. In this enlightened age, when arts and sciences are carried to a pitch unthought of in former times, it was not likely that this branch should be neglected ; and accordingly, we find many of our nobility, gentlemen of landed property, and public societies, fully aware of its importance, and endeavouring by premiums and a variety of other means, to improve it. Much however still remains to be done ; nor is it probable that their endeavours will be crowned with success, till botany is more cultivated, and plants, particularly the grasses, better understood.

How incapable our modern writers on agriculture are of communicating their discoveries for want of botanic information, and how much the progress of this most useful science is thereby retarded, must be obvious to all those who have perused their writings with any degree of attention.

I am inclined to suppose, that this inattention of the faculty and others to botany, proceeds in a great

measure from a want of opportunity to acquire it, and that if the means were afforded, there would no longer be cause of complaint or censure.

To afford the means of obtaining this knowledge, is the object of the present institution; an institution which has been attended with considerable expence, and cost the author much time and attention. Should he have the pleasing satisfaction of seeing it become productive of national utility, that he shall think usefully employed, and that attention most happily bestowed.

As the practical part of botany, as well as of every other science, is the most useful, so it is presumed, the mode of communicatinng this knowledge will be such as to meet with general approbation. And as every science should be rendered as easy as possible, more especially botany, in which the objects are so numerous, if it were on no other account than that of saving time, which some individuals can but ill spare from their own proper avocations, so to each plant in the garden, is affixed its generic and trivial name, according to LINNÆUS: and that none may

lose the advantage of acquiring a knowledge of plants from a nonacquaintance with the Latin, the English names also are added, with a view that botany in this familiar dress, might be instructive to those whom the bare mention of a long hard-sounding latin name might tend to discourage.

And the author flatters himself, that many persons who are naturally fond of plants and flowers will readily encourage an undertaking of this kind by which, at the same time that they indulge their particular taste, they may insensibly acquire knowledge.

It has been objected by a few, that a knowledge of plants thus easily acquired, is as easily forgotten but this must certainly be more the fault of the student than of the method, as he may spend as much time as he pleases in investigating them, and becoming perfectly acquainted with their characters.

It now remains for the author to express his gratitude to his friends, who have patronized, encouraged, and assisted him in his undertaking.

To the generosity and public spirit of the honourable *Daines Barrington*, and *Thomas White*, Esq. his worthy patrons in this undertaking, the Garden in great degree owes its existence.

From His Majesty's matchless collection of plants in the royal garden at Kew, he has had the honour of receiving many scarce and valuable plants, both British and foreign.

As also from the gardens of the Earl of *Bute*, at *Woburn*; the Duchess Dowager of *Portland*, at *Bulwer Park*; Dr. *Fothergill*, at *Upton*; Dr. *Pitcairn*, at *Edinburgh*; and the *Apothecaries Company*, at *London*, whose respective gardens are monuments of national honour.

From the Rev. Mr. *Lightfoot*, of *Uxbridge*, he received the *Briza minor*, *Lathyrus hirsutus*, *Urtica*, &c.

From *T. G. Cullum*, Esq. of *Bury St. Edmunds*, his brother *Sir John Cullum*, he is indebted for *Penstemon pilosa*, *Veronica triphyllos*, *verna*, &c.

The Rev. Dr. *Goodenough*, of Ealing, sent him a considerable collection of maritime plants.

To *Thomas Collinson*, Esq. he is obliged for many curious exotics.

To Messrs. *Gordon*, *Lee*, *Kennedy*, and *Malcolm* he is also under similar obligations.

The following persons have likewise contributed as under.

Mr. *Sole*, Apothecary, of Bath, the *Cyperus longus*, *Lithospermum purpureo-cæruleum*, *Thalictrum minus*, &c.

Mr. *William Fothergill*, Wensleydale, Yorkshire, *Rubus Chamæmorus*, *saxatilis*, *Primula farinosa*, &c.

Mr. *Joseph Cockfield*, Upton, *Veronica hybrida*.

Mr. *Dickson*, Covent-Garden, *Secale villosum*, &c.

Dr. Calvert, Doctors Commons, *Andromeda polifolia*, *Dentaria bulbifera*.

Mr. John Wagstaff, Norwich, *Verbascum pul-
verulentum*. N. S.

Mr. Joseph Sparshall, Yarmouth, *Atriplex pe-
dunculata*.

Mr. Wheeler, *Scilla autumnalis*, *Bupleurum te-
nuissimum*.

Mr. Sibley, *Serapias longifolia*, *Satyrion viride*.

Mr. Ridout, *Caucalis Daucoides*, *Eryngium ma-
ritimum*.

Mr. Upham, *Asplenium Ceterach*, &c.

Mrs. Ann Curtis, Alton, *Carduus eriophorus*.

Mr. Jacob Rayer, various plants growing about
London.

To these his kind contributors, the author re-
turns his grateful thanks, and hopes there are many
persons in different parts of Great Britain, who
will not need the stimulus of example, to add to the
number of plants already collected.

THE Botanic Garden proposed to be opened and as yet in its infancy, is situated on the south side of Blackfriars-Bridge, in Higler's-Lane, Lambeth Marsh, near the Magdalen Hospital.

It is surrounded on two sides of it by water which ebbs and flows with the tide, and which being let in, renders it very convenient for the growth of aquatics.

It contains 700 English plants, 80 of which are grasses strictly so called; 100 officinal plants, or such as are used in physic; and a considerable number of foreign plants; all of which have in general grown and flowered as well, as if they had been more remotely situated from London.

C O N D I T I O N S.

I. **T**HAT the garden shall be kept in neat order.

II. That the generic and trivial name of each plant from LINNÆUS, as also the English name, shall be painted in legible characters, and affixed to each plant.

III. That every endeavour shall be used, that it may contain, 1st. all the physical plants enumerated in the *Materia Medica* contained in LEWIS'S *Dispensatory*, commonly called the *New Dispensatory*, with such other plants as are of more modern introduction, excepting such as require a hot-house: 2d. all those plants of known or reputed poisonous qualities; and 3d. all those which are in general use for food.

IV. That all the physical and eatable plants now in general use, together with such as are generally considered as poisonous, shall be arranged together; and

and that those which are seldom used in medicine shall be distributed among the other plants of the garden, a part of the stick on which the letters are marked, affixed to such plants, being painted yellow.

V. That besides the Linnæan and English name to be affixed to each officinal plant, the page and article in which the plant is to be found in that part of Lewis's Dispensatory which contains the Materia Medica, shall also be marked on the stick : by this means the medical student not only becomes acquainted with the Linnæan name, but likewise with the name by which it is kept in the shops, as also that of CASPAR BAUHINE, with a concise account of the natural history, use, &c. of each plant. And it is recommended to such medical students as wish to acquire this necessary knowledge, to bind up separately the Materia Medica part of the said Dispensatory, that it may be more portable.

To illustrate the intention of this plan, let us suppose that the student finds in the garden, among the physical plants, one with this superscription, *Veronica Becabunga*, p. 102. a. 1. he then refers

to his pocket volume, in which, at page 102, article
 I. he reads as follows. “ *Becabungæ seu Anagalli-*
dis aquaticæ folia : Veronicæ aquaticæ folio subro-
tundo, Moris. hist. BROOKLIME, the leaves.
 [L. E.] This is a low plant, growing commonly
 in little rivulets and ditches of standing water ; the
 leaves remain all the winter, but are in greatest
 perfection in the spring. Their prevailing taste is
 an herbaceous one, accompanied with a very
 slight bitterishness.”

“ Becabunga has been supposed to have a saponaceous detergent virtue, and to attenuate viscid humours without pungency or irritation, hence it has been directed in that species of Scurvy called hot, where the Cochleariæ, and other acrid antiscorbutics, were suppose to be less proper. It is now used only in composition with those plants as in the fucci scorbutici, [L. E.] but does not perhaps add much to their efficacy. If any virtue is expected from Becabunga, it should be used as food.”

VI. That in like manner the English grasses, and

and all those plants generally used in Agriculture shall be disposed together in a separate quarter.

VII. That every means shall be adopted to procure as complete a collection of English plants as can be made to grow, all of which shall be kept in quarters distinct from exotic ones.

VIII. That justice may be done to the plants of our own country, and that those who visit the garden may see how much our gardens are in general indebted to them, it is proposed to cultivate them in all their varieties, including double flowers.

IX. That as many foreign plants as possible which bear this climate, shall be introduced, retaining for the sake of distinctness, only one or two of each species.

X. That the plants may be distinguished by the several uses, a part of the stick affixed to each, shall be painted of some distinguishing colour, as yellow for physic, blue for food, black for poison, red for dying, and green for agriculture or oeconomical purposes.

XI. That a convenient room situated in the garden, shall be opened for the subscribers to study in; and that duplicates of those books which are necessary for students, shall be there deposited.

XII. That the garden and library, shall be open for the use of subscribers on four days in the week, viz. *Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays*, from six in the morning till eight at night.

XIII. That a catalogue of the garden shall be published in March 1780, in which the plants will be arranged alphabetically, with their Latin and English names, and their particular situations in the garden referred to, with a list of the subscribers and contributors to the garden, to one of which each subscriber will be intitled.

XIV. That every subscriber, on paying annually the sum of *Two Guineas*, shall be intitled to walk and study in the said garden on the days above specified be accompanied by any one person they chuse.

A book for entering the names of subscribers is put at the garden. Subscriptions are also received by

W. CURTIS, No. 51, *Gracechurch-Street.*

No specimens allowed but by permission from the
gardener.

The garden to be opened the 1st of January, 1779.

F I N I S,



